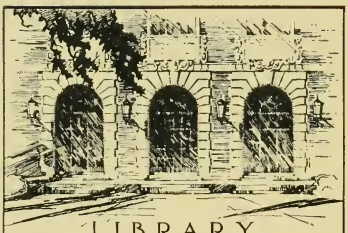

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THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

REFORM OR DISESTABLISHMENT,

WHICH?

BY

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PREFACE.

Since the following pages were first issued, two of the questions discussed in them have become the subjects of Parliamentary notice.

The Public Worship Regulation Bill has been avowedly introduced by the Archbishop of Canterbury in restraint of Ritualism; and a select Committee of the House of Lords has been obtained by the Bishop of Peterborough to consider how to abate the scandals of commerce in patronage.

To attain these ends, the Bill of the Archbishop and the speech with which the Bishop prefaced his motion proposed the same means —More power to the Bishops.

It was perhaps only natural that the measures of the Episcopal Body should have taken this direction. From every quarter they had had to bear blame for matters having been allowed to come to their present pass: their consultations were held, not after communication with the Councils of their Dioceses—between Bishops and Deans and Chapters the estrangement has been long and complete—but in secret conclave, apart by themselves. There their course was decided on, and their measures prepared: there, where the independence of the clergy and the rights of the laity were alike voiceless and without advocate. No wonder that their deliberations found expression in a proposition to place confidence in their absolute discretion; in a simple form of remedy, the extension of the power of their Order; and that their policy might be indicated by one word—repression.

The assertion of Archdeacon Denison, that every Incumbent is Bishop in his own parish, is—like many of his statements—extravagant in phrase; but it embodies a truth, the recognition of which has grown up both under the protection of English law and the sympathy of social opinion, the virtual independence of the Parson of each parish within his own cure.

Every addition of mere power to the office of the Bishop, as distinct from fatherly influence, strikes at this independence of the parochial clergy, leads up to investing the Prayer Book with the attributes of perfection and infallibility, tends to narrow (instead of extending, as must needs be, if it is to exist as such) the confines of the National Church, and so must prove in the long run detrimental to the continuance of its establishment. It was wisely said by a great mind who has passed away for some years, that in the theory of the Church of England the power of the Bishop is absolute, but that in real practice it is reduced within very moderate limits, and that the attempt to make the practice concur with the theory would be to endanger the Church itself.

The Public Worship Regulation Bill in its amended form and as it stands for reading in the House of Commons has materially curtailed the Bishop's absolute discretion by requiring him to give and file his reasons for refusing to assent to any proceeding under it, and has transferred the additional power sought for to a Court for the two Provinces to be presided over by one judicial mind.

Yet though these changes in the Bill before it left the House of Lords may be a great improvement, the policy remains the same, repression of all departures from the rubric, not in respect of sacerdotal ceremonial alone, but, as is fair, in any direction whatever; the mode of remedy is litigation made cheap.

Thus we are on the point of being committed to a new course of policy, and launched on a career of ecclesiastical legislation, of which the present Bill will form only the commencement. And this at the fag end of a session, in which every other measure of magnitude has been suspended on the allowed plea that a new Government has not had time for due consideration.

It may suit the views of an Institution combatant, like the Church Association, to press for its acceptance and to get up petitions in support, just because Ritualists have petitioned against it; but surely it would be better far that during the recess the members of the Church at large should have that opportunity, which the Bishop of Peterborough deprecates, of fairly and at leisure weighing proposals for the future of the Church of England, instead of being committed to hasty legislation by the passing of an Act of very doubtful "innocence."

Surely there is enough to give pause to those who love their Church when they consider what the Bishop's discretion may mean, if exercised for instance in the spirit of "*excipienda*," which commend themselves to the mind, or call out the strenuous opposition of the Bishop of Peterborough, or what opening up of harassing litigation, party against pary in turn, if interpreting the exercise of his discretion, as the discharge of the duties of a grand jury, a Bishop should give scope for every proceeding which showed a probable foundation of fact.

The precedent, not an unsual one, of the Friendly Societies' Bill might well be followed for the Public Worship Regulation Bill; that in deference to its authors it should be read a second time and committed *pro formâ*, on the understanding that it should be proceeded with no further this Session.

Not to seek refuge in repression, not to reduce the Church of England to the cold expression of decent and constrained uniformity, but to put faith in its members, and to trust in their love and interest to keep it the fitting representative of National Christianity; to believe in freedom and to give fair influence to each school of thought in an age when religious questions on every side stir the souls of men to their depths—this is the principle, which these pages would enforce and endeavour to develope a scheme for more fully attaining. They have been submitted for consideration in the conviction that by thus restoring the rights of the laity, the Church of England would widely enlarge her borders; even her divisions into various schools would be rendered consistent with greater peace within, and her warfare without carried on with united forces in her righteous crusade against ignorance, falsehood and vice: "a hope too precious to be lightly abandoned."

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THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

REFORM OR DISESTABLISHMENT,

WHICH?

I.

The Archbishops of the Church of England have, during the present year, in their reply to a memorial from 60,000 of the laity against Romanising practices in the Church, expressed their conviction "of the existence of a considerable minority, both of clergy and laity, among us, desiring to subvert the principles of the Reformation," and appeal "to all reasonable persons to consider whether the very existence of our national institutions for the maintenance of religion is not imperilled by the evils complained of."

Similar language has been reiterated by several of their suffragans; or, with perhaps a solitary exception, has been received by others with a silence that can hardly betoken anything but an admission of these statements.

Two dangers then—for the future—rise before the Church of England; one, that her doctrines and services will be assimilated to the Church of Rome: the other, that her overthrow as a National Church, will be the consequence of the attempt.

The latter, Churchmen in the main, may regard with regret, or accept as the desperate expedient of extremity, in order to preserve the teaching of the principles of the Reformation to themselves and their children; whilst Nonconformists, little conscious of the narrow sectarianism and theological illiberality which might supervene as the result of that event, may look forward to it as matter for rejoicing. But on the undesirableness of the former, the vast majority of the Church laity, and the whole body of Nonconformists are at one.

It is to the Church laity who thus think that this paper appeals; to Nonconformists also, in the hope that they may recognise that the reform it proposes, would lessen the distance between themselves and the National Church, or even open a way for bodies of them to rejoin her communion, consistently with the retention of their religious freedom.

For the Established Church in its present state affords to one, who desires its continuance, and who is not content with superficial appearances, the most doubtful prospect for the future.

With very defined outlines of doctrine, the great leaders of the Reformation, in the spirit of compromise and with the desire of comprehending as many as possible within her communion, embodied phrases, allusions, or forms in the Liturgy contrarient to their very principles.

For a moment, indeed, the policy was not unsuccessful, and the whole nation might be said to be within the fold of the Reformed Church. The Bull of Pius V. sundered finally all hope of unity, and Romanism became a sect in England.

Then, instead of passing penal statutes, was the time when a counter blow might have been struck; what had thus been retained before, expunged from her services, and the Church of England opposed as distinctly to sacerdotalism in doctrine, as the State was antagonistic to the Papacy in politics. The opportunity passed away, then and again.

Now, in a restless age, these very phrases are made the justification for a party remaining within the Church, whose object is to undo the work of the Reformation; and the groundwork of a scheme to bring back the human mind into bondage to claims of sacerdotal power.

Step by step through thirty years this party have been spreading their views, silently or more openly aggressive. Bishops gave them a partial support; for they could not but regard with kindly eye men who with profusion of reverence knelt before them for the blessing of an order of higher sanctity than their own: they could not but listen with greedier ear to their professions of submissive obedience to whatever they, in the discharge of apostolic functions, should pronounce *ex cathedrâ*.

So Bishops have shown to all but the most extreme amongst them countenance and favor: have apologised for their excess through zeal, have praised their laborious devotion, almost as though such was exclusively confined to them, till, as it were with the swan-like tones of words even close upon death, one has been compelled to speak with hatred and abhorrence of attempts to Romanise the Church of England.

Of the clergy a large body looked with a not unnatural approval on their tendencies of thought to exalt the pastor's

office, extend its power, and raise it above the level of common life. Others, sympathisers, yet cautious not to bring comfortable benefices into question, have encouraged their curates to pronounce more dogmatically than themselves—*qui fautores utroque laudabunt pollice ludum.*

Thus favored and surrounded, the party have taken all such sanction, but have yielded no point in return in moderating their views. They have known the value of union, of force, of boldness, of forward movement.

Threats of secession, when it served their purpose, have been prompt and loud.

Touch, for instance, the Athanasian Creed as a profession of faith of the Church: nay, give but the option of use or disuse and—we secede.

Let the highest court of ecclesiastical law venture to condemn the sacramental doctrines of Bennett and—we secede.

Nay, to mingle lighter things with grave, a venerable and impulsive Archdeacon from among them was forward to declare his intention of courting with serious advances that nymph, erewhile uncomely in his eyes, the Liberation Society.

The world is wont (for just at the moment it saves trouble) to bow to audacity; so their policy, covert or open, has succeeded.

The decision of the Privy Council in this memorable Bennett judgment seemed less to emanate from the cold and lofty regions of abstract law, than from a certain cowering before consequences—from influences felt though unseen—from the desire to steer a course of apparent tranquillity.

Should their decision be adverse, the gaunt spectre of a great schism rose up against the council; if it were but any how, even evasively, an acquittal, there was pretty good ground for confidence that the opposite party, with hostages given to fortune (whatever some man more rash or of more sensitive conscience than his fellows might do), would never so take umbrage as to abandon preferment for separation.

The Bennett judgment then, having admitted that their sacramental views may be held within the pale of the Church of England, has added to the Ritualistic party yet greater boldness.

They have gone on openly to memorialise Convocation for the recognition of sacramental confession, and of a body of licensed confessors, as a need of spiritual life within the church.

Openly in a measure, for this word must be used with qualification. Feeble and fatuous attempts were made indeed to jeer away the gravity of the document in respect of the numbers signing; because, forsooth, some blunderer said that he mistook it for a burial petition! But the attempt only showed how men try to deceive themselves rather than admit what is unpleasant, but which they cannot amend. For the fact is that numbers favored and assented to beyond those who signed it—indeed it has been alleged on the authority of one of the signataries, that not 483, but 2,000 priests in the Church of England were in concord with the views of the memorial on confession.

Indignation meetings are held throughout the country against these tenets. Fervid eloquence stirs the dense

crowds for an hour; violent accusations of dishonesty are hurled against them—of disloyalty—of treachery.

True in a wide view of the reformation work, but evasible under the phraseology of compromise, and the rule of courts of law to construe penal sanctions as strictly as possible.

Nay more, the Ritualists reciprocate with not less virulence these charges.

What, say they, are revisionists, but men who confess that the Prayer Book does not hold the doctrines of regeneration, absolution, &c., as they do? It is they therefore that are dishonest who seek to make changes in the language, instead of going outside the Church to found or find a communion on their own lines for themselves. Whatever fallacy underlies such allegations, it serves the purpose, as of boys at school, to meet an accusation with a countercharge, since it disturbs the assailant and distracts the judgment of bystanders.

Meanwhile the spirit of enthusiastic meetings evaporates, and the emotions of excited listeners die down; whilst day by day, under cover of their positions in the Church, the priestly advocates of confession insinuate amongst the inexperienced and the weak, the disheartened, the sorrowing and the sick, the dread or the consolations, which they arrogantly impose or offer to the unformed conscience, or the overburdened soul.

The Evangelical party on the other hand have never quite stood on firm ground, for they have never fairly accepted principles on which the Reformation was based,

the freedom of the human mind, the responsibility of private judgment, the duty of search for truth.

Their leaders with a somewhat superficial acquaintance with theology, but with a burning and fervent zeal for God and Christ amongst a people neglected, ignorant and Godless, and without a thought of the difficulties of scripture criticism, enounced their system of dogma. Their followers, led away by an exaggerated but pardonable reverence for their work and zeal, spoke of all piety beyond their circle, as though the scheme of Christianity had lain hidden till the preaching of Simeon and Venn; and of the patient investigations of reviving criticism as a profane and unholy attempt "to be wise above that which was written." They reiterated the expressions of their leaders and kept closely to their groove of thought. Just in proportion as the enthusiasm of the movement began to spend itself, and the measure of devotion in the lives of the adherents of the school fell down very much to the level of others within the ranks of the clergy, they guarded with a more jealous watchfulness the use of their peculiar terminology; from the due application of its shibboleths judged whether a young clergyman was truly converted, sound in the faith. Everything like originality of thought was discouraged, any venture of enquiry frowned down, and the expression of certain views exacted with as much assertiveness as though they spoke the creed of an infallible Church. "Cribbed, cabined, and confined" within the constrained limits of partial views, their language became more and more the vapid utterances of thoughts at second hand, stock phrases, parrot-like repetitions of their leaders' teachings; the like

words dribbling in feeble platitudes from the mouths o the disciples, which had fallen from the masters' lips instinct with life and fire.

Mainly conducive to this result has turned out the gain of a power, from which the Evangelical party hoped strength, but which has tended to weakness.

The legacy which Simeon bequeathed by his will has corrupted the work to which he had given his zeal and his life, and lowered the *morale* of successors who should bear on his banner. His last dying will and testament was too much like a putting of trust in the power of money to spread truth, and not in the power of truth itself.

It is the operation of the Simeon and other such like trusts, since founded on its precedent, which has wrought this evil. With the money which he left, his trustees went into the trade in patronage (the end as they thought justifying the means) to buy up livings in populous places in order to place in them those who would preach Evangelical doctrine.

No doubt the words, by which Simeon expressed the mode in which he wished his trust to be administered, might be frank and liberal enough, but to secure their object such trusts were constituted of the most exclusive of the party ; to continue it, provision was made that surviving trustees should fill up vacancies in the body. The tendency of such close bodies to engender narrowness and to form a clique was inevitable. Thus fostered, it has grown and increased. Since the trustees, remote from the towns in which their livings were placed, could know but little of candidates in their life and work, they had to depend for information on sources they thought reliable,

on an external of popularity perchance, or but too often on secret communications, whispered surmisings, back-stairs recommendations; sometimes it would seem, where novices were promising but doubtful, on written answers to questions privately sent. The result has been that with rare exceptions of unquestionable sincerity, this party have repelled from sympathy thoughtful and reflective students, so that their main body of recruits has been drawn from a lower class of minds, whose scantily furnished stores of knowledge, prejudiced bias, and minds devoid of original, and content with second-hand ideas, evidence themselves in the pulpit in jejune commonplaces on the same subjects; discourses rambling or skeleton-strung, but dreary, somniculose.

But in losing their pre-eminence as preachers they were losing all. To preach was their *raison d'être;* they were teachers or they were nothing. And this decadence in their influence was accelerated not only by their own failure to continue a race of preachers of power, but also by the rise of the quality of what was preached amongst numbers who held aloof from their party. The establishment of a wide-spread system for the supply of sermons throughout the country, brand-new from London manufactories, whose style and ring and turn of sentences, and careful medium tone, with leanings just a little high, it is not hard to recognise well-nigh anywhere in country parishes, has placed many an easy-going incumbent of reputable life, moderate views, and yet more moderate habits of study, upon a level with the rank and file of the Evangelical following even as preachers.

The depreciation too by this school of the Liturgy, and

the coldness, not to say the slovenly irreverence, which not seldom grew out of it, in the performance of the services, has reacted to their further discomfiture. An ornate ritual grew attractive as a relief from dulness; whilst in recent years hymnothetists, with no concealed bias towards their opponents, have entered into the heritage of the Wesleys and their contemporaries, of the subtle influence over the human soul possessed by numerous verse married to melody.

So that great, and, but a few years since, most powerful party in the Church of England, losing ground constantly, has fallen into weakness and aimlessness, stricken with decrepitude.

Again, the investigations of the school of Niebuhr amongst the chroniclings of the past, where the trustworthy and the legendary have been blent in narrative, have dignified history with the reflectiveness and deductions of philosophy.

Physical science, also, in its multiform development has inconceivably extended our ideas of the vastness of the universe: of the infinite progression of ages through which this world has "woned;" of the succession of created beings, which have lived and passed away from its surface; of the races of men, some on the very soil of our own land, long extinct, who reach back into a hoar antiquity before undreamt of.

They, who are students of these subjects, deem with St. Paul, that "the invisible things of God, even His eternal power and Godhead, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things

that are made;" and seek His revelation of Himself as well in His works, as in the Holy Scriptures which have survived to record the voices of His Spirit, and the words of His messengers. Yet they hold that these Scriptures are to be examined in their language, their composition, their history, by the same canons of criticism which furnish in respect of all ancient records necessary guides in the severe indagation of truth. For, truly, nothing could be more fatal to the purity and spirituality of religion itself, than that the Clergy of the Church should be withdrawn from the cognizance of such subjects, should cease to keep abreast with the knowledge of the age, or should separate belief, as something aloof and apart from the revelations of science, or the agonies of the human mind in its struggles after knowledge.

Just in proportion as this should take place, would religion become a thing of outward ceremonies, of ritual observances, of credulous superstition, to which men might bow, but in which there is no trust. There has, therefore, grown up within the ranks of the clergy a smaller body, who have thrown themselves into the counsels of science and the deliberations of history, only to be met, or ever they have spoken, with a like cuckoo-cry that they ought to take out of the Church their rationalism, infidelity, what not? They stand confronted with accepted theories of verbal and plenary inspiration, which would place on a level the recordings of Chronicles, the bitter invective of Babylonish Psalms, or the prophecies of Daniel with the pure and lofty ethics of the Sermon on the Mount, the manna dropping down from Heaven in the words of the evening before the Crucifixion, or the glorious hopes of the resurrection

of the spiritual body in "Him who brought life and immortality to light." They stand confronted with records of the creation of the world, with narratives of Eden, or of the universal flood, all which they feel it is vain to endeavour to reconcile as literal fact with the discoveries of science. They live in an age of enquiry in every direction into the wonderful works of God, and they are called upon to bow the neck to definitions of the interrelationships of the Godhead, promulgated by the ecclesiastical arrogance of an age when all knowledge was darkened and society broken up. They are bidden by the functions of their office (in language, the meaning and comprehensiveness of which, in the age in which it was framed, was only too little doubtful) to launch the anathemas of perdition, and on those festivals especially which are more than all other consecrated to the divinest manifestations of the Love of God, against the souls of their fellow men.

Literally "with groanings that cannot be uttered," they have to keep to themselves doubts, anxieties, the strivings of the spirit within. Can they look to Bishops for guidance? One, whose axiom is *quieta non movere*, eyes them askance, and keeps them at arm's length. Another is sought in conference by a distressed country parson, prepared to surrender his living, and face poverty with wife and children. With what comfort may be guessed, when Mrs. Proudie excuses to her guest that "luncheon is rather late, because the poor Bishop has been worried all the morning by one of those wretched clergy about their conscientious scruples." Others, who have crept up the ladder of preferment, since the world can allege nothing but vague doubts as to their tenets, whilst they enjoy the

popularity of a sentimental liberality, opine that it is not well that Bishops should speak their thoughts; for have they not already discerned to their advantage, that if speech is silvern, silence is golden?

Nay, even where discussion must be admitted, in the domain of critical enquiry, there is a manifest fear, lest danger should lurk in following after, and finding truth.

The timidity thus generated may be witnessed in the notes of "Alford's Greek Testament," or the articles in "Smith's Dictionary of the Bible" *passim*.

The arguments on the one side and the other are given with a considerable measure of laudable fairness, but when the conclusions have to be drawn, the scale of orthodoxy is made to prevail with a certainty, which not seldon provokes a smile, rather than carries conviction to the reader, judicially weighing the evidence.

In truth, the limits within which the Evangelical party confine the expressions of their views are clearly within those of the chief founders of our Reformed Church, and thus the former efforts of the High Church to oust them by legal means failed egregiously. The Sacerdotal party too can find expressions in the formularies, deliberately retained or inserted, on which to reconstruct their system within the Church's pale. Hence the laborious organisation and costly proceedings of the Church Association have issued in nothing more than some slight ceremonial restrictions, not difficult of evasion, and in a judgment concerning doctrine, which has surrendered to sacerdotalism a vantage ground, better than ever held before, for fresh advances; or in which, if the Association can find comfort, it must be in a spirit

thankful for small mercies. But though the germs of thought on subjects, to which the minds of those styled the Broad Church are keenly alive, may be traced in Erasmus or Luther, such indications found no recognition in the formularies which theology and politics combined to put forth as the outward expression of the tenets of the Church.

For them, therefore, there are no doubtful phrases, behind which they may find protection from legal consequences, if they give public utterance to opinions which free and open discussion could best refute, or modify, elucidate, or establish.

Few, moreover, are disposed to seek to put on that unsatisfactory martyr's crown of sheer neglect, whose chafing has to be borne daily, when after the courts of law have tumbled him out of his benefice, none concern themselves what may become of the cast out.

There spreads then below the surface an *impacata quies;* a secret doubting in the minds of many, who by calling are teachers ; an avoidance of opinion on great topics, stifled enquirings, a constrained silence, choked utterances, a policy of speech cautious and reserved.

And what is the result of this repression of enquiry? A lowering of the standard of education and intellect amongst the clergy at large, because so considerable a proportion of vigorous university men no longer seek to enrol themselves in the ranks. It is not only that the other professions, the army, civil service in India and at home, engineering, manufactures enter into competition and open a more lucrative field, whilst free from mental restraints : nothing is more striking than the silent yet

rapid way, in which a body of men of attainments, who do not seek Orders as of old, have begun to constitute the staff of our great schools. It is a consequence and recognition, not a cause of the fact, that wellnigh all recent schemes for the improvement of schools, withdraw the limitation even of the head and second masters' posts to those in Holy Orders.

Yet the need for more clergy in our populous districts presses daily. What wonder then if Bishops are not only content with university men of more ordinary capacity or of uncertain and weakly health, but are driven to recruit their supply from the unexamined students of Theological Colleges, or the crude material of scripture readers? Without wishing to disparage the value of a few young men of earnest piety, intent upon their calling, from amongst them, such men—destitute for the most part of the refining influences of liberal education, and with no more than a course of special theological cram superinduced upon a mere smattering of classics, unenlightened by history or science—take orders: find amongst the laity their superiors in position, education, wealth, and then seek refuge and self-importance in parade of vestments and the claims of power for a sacerdotal office.

These are the dissensions, divisions, weaknesses of the Church within. Thus it comes to pass that the two parties, who are identified respectively with the doctrines and the principles of the Reformation, are alike weak and disorganised: the Sacerdotal party arrogant, united, aggressive.

The laity listen to mutual recriminations of one against the other, or both, on their dishonesty in eating

the bread of the Church, or remaining to minister within her communion. If they side with one, they must fain believe it of the other; or if they hold aloof, they come to consider that all alike act for lucre's sake, and their estimate of the ministerial character is lowered accordingly.

Without power to express a will, they are bandied about from one set of teachers to another. It seems mere hap-hazard, whether a congregation affectionately attached to an Evangelical pastor may not on a change be disquieted by the vagaries of an ultra Ritualist, puffed up with the idea of his own authority, and bent on having his own way.

Submission, or dissent, is their only alternative.

In health, indeed, parishioners may please themselves so far, that, if they are not too much of what Hugh Miller styles "cat-Christians," they can withdraw from the building in which they have national rights and frequent another church. But in sickness the priest can, and does, thrust the exercise of his sacerdotal functions on unwilling recipients, or, supported by the law, refuse to allow the clergyman of that other church to cross the confines of his parish.

As for dissent, there is a diocese, lately administered by a Prelate of remarkable power and most winning courtesy, of whom it has been boasted that he never promoted any but curates in it to his livings, but whose influence was so used, and whose selection was so guided by his High Church proclivities that over large areas none but parish priests of that school were to be found.

For the fruit, dissent has rooted itself the deeper

in the villages as a protest; the strength of which his clergy confessed, if they did not appreciate, when in answer to his episcopal enquiry they classed together amongst the great hindrances to their work beer-shops, and dissent!

Hence, just as Ritualism gains ground within her borders, and Romanism presses her sore without, all the great bodies of the Nonconformists combine with a more zealous unity for her Disestablishment, and even the Wesleyans, who, with no forgetful regard of their founder, have shewn on the whole a friendly spirit towards her, are, because of this growth of Ritualism, already joining in the league against her.

The Prelates of the Romish Church, indeed, wise in their generation, are too astute not to see that now is not for them the time of Disestablishment.

The act might rouse such an activity of religious life as should undo and scatter to the winds all the preparation for their communion, which a band of clergy, in heart more than half, and some perhaps in secret allegiance all their own, are so stealthily and steadily carrying on, sapping within the very lines of the fortress.

In very sooth the Romish Church can well afford to wait, whilst it proclaims its labourers ready, fields open for husbandry, but sources as yet inadequate for support or occupation; boasts its yearly spread, its thousands of converts, flaunts before the public gaze with unshrinking effrontery the spectacle of its garish properties, its pilgrimages, its dedications, its visions, its miracles, the Immaculate Conception, an infallible Pope.

But deep within her system the Church of England feeds yet another weakness peculiarly her own, an evil cancer and ulcerous—the sale and purchase of the cure of souls.

The pang of shame for one's Church was not without a cause, when a lawyer, whose high character gained for him universal esteem in a large town, once said, with indignant sarcasm, that the clerical conscience was a thing unintelligible to him, for that it seemed to him there was no oath which it could not find a way to evade.

His allusion was in direct reference to that oath, "to avoid the detestable sin of simony," which is ministered by the Bishop to every clergyman on institution to a benefice, "I do swear that I have made no simoniacal payment, contract, or promise, directly or indirectly, by myself, or by any other to my knowledge, or with my consent, to any person or persons whatever, for, or concerning, the procuring or obtaining of this ecclesiastical place, preferment, office, or living, nor will I at any time hereafter perform or satisfy any such kind of payment, contract, or promise, made by any other without my knowledge or consent: so help me God, through Jesus Christ."

And yet, what is daily the case?

A next presentation is in the market, likely to become vacant, or with immediate possession advertised. A clergyman, who fancies it may be a suitable place to settle down in, makes his enquiries about price, views the place, judges of the commodiousness of the rectory, the pleasantness of the grounds and prospect, what advantages it possesses in local society; in fact of all and every thing, except whether he and his teaching are suited for the

parishioners; deems the position eligible, confers with his friends, or directs and is consulted by his wife's trustees in every step of the negotiation, is cognisant of the pecuniary arrangement by which immediate possession is to be insured, is presented by those trustees to the vacancy in the cure of souls thus created; and then, in order to be instituted to this "holy office and administration in the Church," for which it is prayed that "those who are called to them may be replenished with the truth of God's doctrine, and endued with innocency of life, to serve faithfully before Him," he makes solemn oath before his Father in God, that neither directly nor indirectly, either by himself or any other, &c., &c.

Men's consciences may be seared and deadened by interest, usage, connivance, but none the less is the blot upon the soul, "is the offence rank and smells to Heaven!"

Palliate it, excuse it, defend it, nay, justify it by what chicanery men will, with what face dare, with what authority of character can a man reprove immorality amongst his people, whose very claim to his office rests upon what in the court of conscience, in the common and natural sense of language, is falsehood and false swearing?

The ancient medal might represent *Judæa capta* sitting mournful. For this sin against souls, a modern medal might well image the Church of England in the attitude of Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth, rubbing her hands and crying, "Out damnèd spot." Better all the strifes and contentions which are alleged to result amongst Nonconformists from popular elections, than the uncleanness of this eating sore, the secrecy of this convenient vice.

Nay, the depraving tendency of this traffic affects the disposal of private patronage not sold.

As there is no open emulation, none of the free and healthy action of appointments by the voice of the Church, so that men can feel that they are placed in a post, not as a personal favour conferred by a patron, but because of their deservings, every vacancy, expected or sudden, is the signal, whether hastily or aforethought, of indecent canvassing and solicitation.

A practice how wide-spread might be gathered, when at a Midland Congress, the whole body of the clergy present sat with closed lips, while a noble earl spoke in contemptuous tones of the hunt for preferment, which he looked upon as the common experience of every patron!

Is the above a true picture? Are such the divisions and disorganisation, which prevail within the Church in doctrine and system? Is not every lineament drawn from life, nor "aught set down in malice?"

What wonder, then, that the buzz goes on of Disestablishment; of the relinquishment of a National Church for disjointed voluntary sects. Not of the whether, but of the how and when; not of a conclusive judgment for or against an Establishment, but of under what political combinations, and how long before Disestablishment will take place?

And yet, surely, a National Church realised is too grand an element in a nation's weal and life to be abandoned without misgiving: though fanatic sectaries, powerful only to work ruin, may strive to bring it low; or those bigots may cause it to fall, whose only purpose in the world's history would seem to be to bring on great changes by fighting against all change.

II.

One great Reform seems practicable, by which Disestablishment may be averted, yet the disorganisation which is at present spreading so rapidly be checked, and the National Church again more firmly set fast.

The barrenness of feasible suggestions which prevails, warrants its consideration.

Restore to the laity something equivalent to their ancient rights in the Early and Saxon Church—a voice in the election of their pastors.

How this may be done it will be attempted to set out in some detail. Should any be disposed to decry the plan for incompleteness, tediousness, or expensiveness, let them show forth a better way. It will suffice for the writer to have obtained discussion, to have set the stone in motion: *crescat vires eundo!*

Generally, then, all livings may be comprehended under three heads:—

1. Livings in public patronage; namely such as are in the gift of the Crown, Bishops, corporate bodies, &c.

2. Livings in *quasi* public trust; such as those in the gift of bodies of trustees, constituted for particular purposes.

3. Those in private patronage.

The steps taken for each of these kinds of patronage would be different, and vary as to the time required to bring the scheme into full accomplishment.

1. To deal with that first, which is more distinctly

publici juris—patronage in the hands of the Crown, Bishops, colleges, corporations, aggregate and sole.

As a first step in the restoration of the rights of the laity, let all the above patronage in livings cease, except where the population of the parish is less than *one thousand* souls, or where in boroughs with a population exceeding this number the endowment falls below *two hundred and fifty pounds* per annum.

Even in such excepted livings the Crown patronage should cease, and from this lapse Bishops, colleges, and corporations aggregate, should have transferred to them, as might be practicable and expedient, patronage in the lieu of that lost by the above limitations.

In all livings in which patronage had thus ceased as above, the laity should come at once into the exercise of their rights at the next avoidance; the modes will be indicated below.

2. To take the *quasi* public trusts next.

These are usually held by trustees, who fill up by an irresponsible choice the vacancies in their own body. They have been much in vogue, and have been chiefly constituted for the promulgation of particular doctrinal views. As this is a nuisance more likely to spread than to abate, and as the operation of these schemes converts parishes, utterly irrespective of the views or wishes of the residents, into entrenched positions for the doughty champions of this or that party, there is a public ground of interference.

Trusts so constituted are admittedly unknown to the spirit and constitution of the Church of England; and, unless prescription and lapse of time have conferred a

title, it may be a question whether any Bishop who should summon up moral courage enough to treat their presentation as a nullity, might not be on sound ground in holding that the preferment had lapsed to him.

Yet with this class of livings public interference need be very slight; and, without giving direct countenance to the object for which the trust was constituted at pecuniary cost, still continue its fair influence.

Of such trusts it would be enough to enact that all vacancies in the bodies of trustees should cease to be filled up by co-optation, and that instead thereof new trustees should be chosen from time to time by the seatholders of the congregation, or the tithe-payers of the parishes themselves.

Such a change would involve neither cost nor injustice; since the maintenance of certain views should continue to be attained by the affection and training of the electors themselves. A perpetuity as long as desirable, and far preferable to the growing narrowness and cliquishness engendered by the trusts as now constituted.

In this kind of patronage the voice of the laity would not be, as in the first, effectual at once, but would only then become distinctly potential when trustees elected by them should have become the majority.

3. We come now to the head of livings in private patronage.

These may be sub-divided into two classes by their incidents.

(*a.*) Those advowsons which are held in possession with the land of a parish, or manor within a parish; and

(*b.*) Those which are entirely separated from the possession of land, unless accompanying glebe.

Taking this sub-division as the basis of arrangement,

(*a.*) Let all advowsons of the first class continue to be freehold.

(*b.*) Let those of the second class be converted by enactment into a leasehold tenure.

(*a.*) With regard to those livings included in the first sub-division.

It is no more than reasonable and expedient that this importance and recognition should be continued to the possession of land, seeing that the original endowment of tithes in our Saxon Church was simply a portion of the rent of a manor or manors—thus mainly coincident in boundary with parishes—set apart for payment for religious services by the Thanes who held the land in allodial tenure.

Thus the original patronage vested in the lord of the manor from whose lands the tithes were paid.

The separation of the patronage from the land was effected afterwards as the regular clergy gained ground against the secular.

Beginning from the primacy of Dunstan, in the reign of Edgar, when the rights of patronage of new Churches, except mortuary Chapels, were made to vest in the incumbent of the *paroichia*, it went on rapidly as abbeys were endowed by the transfer of tithes of parishes throughout the Norman and Plantagenet periods.

It was the dissolution of the abbeys at the Reformation and the giving the tithes they held into private patronage —too often accompanied with the appropriation of the

great tithes to lay purposes—which, if it did not initiate, developed and has reduced to a system the scandal of the sale of livings. Hence the patronage, separate from land, which stocks the market and forms the wares of ecclesiastical hucksters. But it needs slight acquaintance with our small country parishes to know the advantages which a patron, holding large properties including whole parishes, can confer by the judicious selection of ministers, who are to live beside him and to work in harmony with him for the benefit of his tenants and dependents. And if in some instances, or not a few, such patrons are content with a low standard of their responsibilities, the alterations with respect to other patronage will tend to quicken their sense of duty, and place them in its discharge under a keener vigilance of public opinion.

Let then, those advowsons, remain freehold where more than *one-half* the land in the parish shall be in the possession of the holder of the advowson, but fall into the regulations of the class below, whenever any should be separated by sale or otherwise from the land.

(*b.*) Let it then be enacted further that all other private patronage should become of leasehold tenure; that is expiring after a certain number of years at a definite time.

The difference between the just value of the perpetual and the leasehold advowson, is that which would be due to the owner for this interference with his vested rights.

It was, perhaps, no more than a rough suggestion, and hardly an original one, when the Bishop of Exeter proposed that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners should buy up all advowsons.

So thrown out, it was obviously crude and unpractical.

All the endowments which the Ecclesiastical Commissioners are so usefully creating for populous parishes would have to be diverted into the pockets of patrons.

Even then, so gigantic a purchase would overtask and exhaust their resources, present and future.

But if advowsons are converted from freehold to leasehold, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners could well defray the cost of the change.

For the difference between the present value of a freehold in perpetuity and of a leasehold for ninety-nine years at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. is less than 1 per cent.: at a higher rate of interest proportionately less. Between a freehold and a leasehold of seventy-five years there would be a difference of little more than 2 per cent.; and of fifty years about 5 per cent. Considering the nature of the property, it may be questionable whether the difference in value between the present possession of an advowson, liable to limitations, incidents, contingencies, and a leasehold of fifty years of that advowson, guaranteed by Act of Parliament, could be more than that between a freehold and a leasehold of ninety-nine years as above.

For it must be borne in mind that whatever legal deference should be conceded to vested interests, the price which an advowson may fetch is partially a speculation, dependent not on rights, but on wrongs.

It is the practice of the sale of next presentations, or of advowsons, with a corrupt undertaking on the part of the existing incumbent for immediate possession, which forces up their price in the market.

Yet in what spirit such transactions are looked upon by the eye of the law is shown by the restriction in

purchases upon the clergy themselves, and by the oath on institution, so shamelessly evaded daily.

It is clearly within the province of Parliament, in the spirit of the existing law, to place at once such restrictions upon this traffic, to guard against their breach by such sanctions, and to visit collusive arrangements with such penalties, as should make it too hazardous and disreputable a risk for any respectable office of legal advisers to have anything to do with.

Such preliminaries of justice were due to the Church to remove an existing scandal, altogether irrespective of any such commutation as now proposed.

The true and just price of an advowson is only that which it would command under such stringent and effectual restraint upon simoniacal dealings.

Whatever the difference between this price and that of a lease of the same advowson for fifty years, let this sum be paid to the patron by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the living become ultimately in the public patronage of the parishioners.

The purchase of any unexpired term of these leases of fifty years might be left to be defrayed by rates levied by vote of a due majority of parishioners, or by gifts of private benevolence, or by grants from any society for such object; such rates, gifts and grants being met by a grant of *one-fourth* their amount by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.

It may well be anticipated from the great sacrifices which the Nonconformists make towards the sustentation of their chapels and ministers, that not only would patronage thus be purchased up by the action of a healthy

religious enthusiasm, but that increased endowments (under a vigour so given to such a scheme as that of the Marquis of Lorne) would throw a bright gleam of hope on the desperate outlook of poor incumbents now drifting to leeward.

The modes of trusts for such advowsons should have a wide latitude, provided only that the rights of the laity to an effective voice in the appointment of their pastors are distinctly recognised therein.

Thus the presentation might lie, as it still does here and there, in some old donatives (seemingly so humble at their foundation as to have escaped Norman rapacity and the greed of monks) with the householders in the parish.

In others, it might lie with the tithe-payers or seat-holders.

In others, Representative Trusts might be constituted, a plan which might be found generally to work the best of all.

In these, *five* trustees connected with the parish might be elected by the parishioners for a term of years, with or without the addition of *two* lay representatives from the Diocese.

The chairman of such trusts should be the Bishop, having a casting vote only, but with power to issue his warrant to his Archdeacon for the Archdeaconry, or to the Rural Dean in the Rural Deanery, to act in his place.

Such would be the general features of a scheme which would include all but perhaps a few exceptional cases.

By direct consequence, and as a part of such restoration of their rights to the laity, another injustice to them

must be removed—the present power of creditors by Queen's writ to the Bishop to sequester a living to satisfy the debts of an incumbent. Tithes in equity are an annual payment for spiritual services so rendered by the receiver.

It is a monstrous abuse that an incumbent's extravagance, itself a grave proof of his unfitness for his position as a spiritual and moral adviser, should be allowed to forestall these payments for many a long year, and to hand over the income of the living to his creditors, except the scanty pittance eked out to him or his *locum tenens* for bare subsistence.

Such privilege accorded to creditors leads them to complicity in extravagance, by carelessly subministering opportunities of incurring debts; whilst the parish is deprived of the benefit of the yearly administration of that income within it, which should maintain the position of its parson.

It is not out of common experience to find parishes, which have suffered the moral blight and actual wrong of such a state of things as this, throughout a generation.

Let the wrong to the parishioners be controlled and circumscribed thus—that the proceeds of no living should be capable of sequestration for more than *three* years; that the effect of a sequestration should be equivalent to a bankruptcy, in so far that the receipts of these three years should, by the payment of a dividend of so much in the pound, wholly discharge the liability for these debts.

Should a second sequestration from fresh debts be issued, then the living to be avoided by the process; but that there should then be assigned to the creditors no

more than *one-third* of the proceeds, nor for longer during the tenure of the new incumbent than *three* years from the date of issue.

III.

With regard to the further effects of this Reform for restoring to the laity rights which they once had in the election of pastors to the cure of souls, but which have been gradually supplanted by the worldly lucre of property in souls, it will be obvious that such changes would set others in motion and would not rest in themselves.

Such further results might be left for the future to develope in their own form and time ; but as they would clearly tend in two directions—in that of organisation and in that of dogma—some notice is due to them here.

I. In organisation they would necessarily lead (1) to an entire reconstruction of that useless and obstructive anachronism—Convocation.

That the Lower House of Convocation is not only no representation of the whole body of the clergy, but even so far as it is representative, is neutralised by an undue preponderance of nominees of the Upper House, or *ex officio* members, is beyond denial.

Of the laity of the Church it is not only no representation at all, but is a standing embodiment of that false principle which obtained in the mediæval, and now holds full sway in the Romish Church, that matters of

faith are for the discussion and settlement of Bishops and priests alone, and that to the laity pertains only to receive and obey.

In reconstruction (for it is beyond mere reform) it would yield place for a body representative as well of the laity as of the clergy, whose regulations would therefore carry with them the weight of opinion of the assembled National Church.

Again, (2) the reform proposed would lead not inconsequently to a different mode of election to the office of Bishops.

It does not need to go back to the gross days of the later Stuarts or the first Georges, to evidence the moral unfitness of lodging this absolute power of appointing chief pastors in the Church of Christ in the hands of the Crown by its Prime Minister; it is enough to recall the admitted private character of some who have wielded it in our own times. Nay, if it were otherwise, it is not right that the disposal of these offices should depend on one whose bias may be strongly in favour of one school, and that perchance repugnant to the religious convictions of the great body of the members of the Church.

Though for some time yet, and in a state of transition, such power might remain as in deposit where it now is, the election of its Bishops could hardly long be withheld from a Church which had vindicated its rights in the election of its pastors. Neither with its representative body organised, would the mode of such election present difficulty.

II. Those further changes in the direction of dogma

to which the above reform would lead, must necessarily lean towards relaxation; an extension of "liberty of prophesying."

As matters now stand, the aspirations of revisionists are a vain chimera, a phantom love. There is and can be no possibility of their success in the Church as it now exists.

But the position of the Clergy in permanent posts, through the confidence of those by whom they were elected, would give them a strength and support lacking now. In the councils of the Church each would speak with more weight, when conscious of having his people with him. With such influence added to his own, an option and alternative, at least, would be obtainable in the usage of passages in the formularies, repugnant to a large party, or of a creed more widely obnoxious still.

But then this scheme would not drive out the Ritualists from their posts within the Church, supported as they are by a minority, more influential perhaps by wealth than numerous?

Certainly not: nor should it be sought to impose novel limitations on any already ordained at the time of their adoption, since the other party would repel the attempt to do so upon them.

But this it would do: it would bring the proportion of clergy upholding Ritualism, to something like the proportion of laity accepting it. It would obviate the outrage of men of such views being thrust by episcopal nepotism, or personal favor, upon congregations averse to their rule, and regarding with detestation their priestly claims. Its effect would be to widen far more towards freedom of

thought, than sacerdotal claims, the basis of the National Church.

If, as we believe is the case, the vast majority of the scientific and professional, the middle and artisan classes are sound at heart in the principles of the Reformation, let them but have such voice, that they may secure the ministrations of men of accordant opinions; and the number of Clergy in parishes advocating sacramental confession, host elevation, and such like, would soon shrink to a number more commensurate with the numerical paucity of their noisy and pretentious lay following. Give to the disciples of Reformation principles power to attain the posts of teachers, and scope to spread their views more boldly, and whatever struggles sacerdotalism might make, it would have to give ground before the advance of knowledge, and to accept defeat before the deeper impulses of free religious thought.

Yet, if the early Church contained within its wide limits an Origen and a Cyprian: if under a common elemental creed it gave play to their divergencies of thought; is it too late to regain the freedom of the past?

The Western Church, by deeming that it was necessary to add dogma to dogma, in order to trace out the confines of orthodoxy and the essentials of faith, has narrowed Christianity and has made itself uncatholic. The Reformed Churches, whilst casting off much of the mind's enslavement through the overgrowth of centuries, have yet kept too much in the track of the Latin Church; not recognising the logical sequence from premises, on which they asserted partial freedom, they have imposed later creeds and new articles for the acceptance and assent,

instead of issuing them as directories, at best only fallible, for the help and guidance of the human soul.

It may be in the future of a Church more truly national, aye, universal, to retrace steps, which have caused, by defining, heresies; and perpetuated, by cutting off, schisms.

In fine, we might hope that the freedom of election above imperfectly advocated, since liberal to all, might bring again within the pale of our Church the large bodies of those who now are separate from her, since they would have little cause for political hostility to a Church, whose children enjoyed so wide a liberty, built upon the strong basis of their own suffrage—a liberty open to them to take their share of.

Our united strength would then be available for combined aggression upon darkness and vice, upon ignorance and sensuality at home and abroad, instead of being dissipated on the internecine animosities which waste the strength of all, and which make the state of the Christian Church in England like that of Great Britain itself, when all along the borders of Scotland and the marches of Wales the force, which now concentrated under one Sovereign places her amongst the first of nations, was neutralised in the watchfulness of mutual hostilities and squandered in petty reprisals.

But it may be objected this would be concurrent endowment. Well, do not let us be too hastily alarmed at the sound of a clap-trap cry.

It would be concurrent endowment, so far that the National Church would comprise openly—as in truth it does more or less in secret now—men of very different

schools; but the endowments would then be used only just so far as the sense of the nation in its units of congregations attributed such revenues to the furtherance of the one or the other.

Let those who are affrighted at the word consider whether, if we could suppose a revolution to sweep away endowments, seat rents, churches, and to hand them over to secular purposes, endowment, though separate yet virtually concurrent, would not be set up by each party again, just in proportion to the strengh of its resources, the depth of its religious fervour, and the constraint of its self-denial.

Like the realisation of the wild dreams of Communism, such revolution would be but to make away with the present, to begin on the morrow the same round of aims and purposes anew.

IV.

The advantage of the changes above advocated would be general, and more or less be partaken of by all.

It would be vain indeed to appeal to the Ritualists for their support, since their effect would be to circumscribe and contract the field of which they are now gaining possession. Yet, whilst it would prevent their being thrust on unwilling flocks, and enabled to force, as now, their ministrations in parishes, on those who abhor their tenets, it would give them a firmer ground in places where their doctrines and practices were acceptable.

It would be also more than sanguine to expect the old High Church to concur, since they have with consistent persistence opposed every reform in the direction of political or religious freedom; yet they are men who hold a well-won respect, distinguished for kindliness of spirit and practical good sense in the every-day matters of life, and whose very faults spring from the tenacity and solidity of thorough English character.

It is surely worth their while to weigh well whether, as they have followed in silence where their leaders have prudently yielded before, the above compromise in favor of the laity were not better than that their rash allies, the Ritualists, to whom they have lent dangerous countenance, should hurry them forward till the national feeling is aroused, and in an hour of political excitement the calamity, as we both should deem it, of Disestablishment overtake and befall the Church.

On the Evangelical party the acceptance of the reform might be strongly pressed, as the only way by which they can struggle out of the distressing position of helplessness and complicity with sacerdotalism into which they have by late events been cast.

They have little to fear, and much perchance to gain. Their congregations, nursed up under ministers of their own appointment, would be likely to select as representative trustees men of like opinions, and secure their present ground; whilst many a parish, now closed against them, would, through lay election, be gained to their cause by adherents, braced by the inspiration of newly-won independence.

They would be apt indeed to look with suspicion lest

these gains should be shared by a section whom they dread more even than the Ritualists—the Broad Church.

No doubt freedom of thought would obtain more definite recognition; but, though here and there a thoughtful man might exercise exceptional influence, they need fear little that the hesitations and spirit of painful investigation, which exercise men of student life, will ever become widely popular.

The standard of intellectuality must be strangely raised amongst our middle classes before they become prone to discuss or to be interested in the speculations which disturb or stir the minds of men of this school: "the wearisome bitterness," as old Lily calls it, "of the scholar's learning."

He who attains the greatest popularity as a religious guide is not he who teaches much and argues profoundly; but he who makes a little of truth go a great way, extends, amplifies, and illustrates, presenting clearly in fresh forms the same recurrent familiar ideas.

Better for the Evangelicals such recognition of the Broad Church, to which the principles of the Reformation, to which they profess to defer, plainly lead, than the suppression which now prevails; just as the open stream is less destructive in its effects than the concealed undercurrent secretly mining.

Amongst those not now of her communion, let the Wesleyans remember the fidelity of their founder to the Church of England, and their old friendship. Of late they have been driven off as at a tangent by the increase of Ritualism, and have shown signs of throwing in their lot with those who seek her Disestablishment.

Let them consider fairly whether such reform does not offer an Eirenicon to them, and open out the way for their return to union on honorable terms.

Nay, were the position so changed, might not the great bodies of Nonconformists, who are now banding together, and invoking the working classes to use their new power to hurry on Disestablishment, give pause?

It were worthy their struggles of old for conscience sake, to regard the question, not in the petty interest of this or that group of chapels, but as to what best concerns the spiritual advance of a whole nation.

Let them not be led away by the *ignes fatui* of abstract theories. An old country is not the place where they can be exclusively developed. To carry practical reforms is feasible: not to start society afresh on the uniformity of a theory. Its advocates will be let and hindered on every side. Their strongest denunciations will but evoke a counter animosity in the battle-field of civil strife, where the victory is never wholly to one side.

Let them rather, as honorable allies, further with all the weight of their organisation and votes this reform within the Established Church, and they will have gone far to gain all the spiritual freedom, in which they themselves may take full share, which they look for from Disestablishment, without the poverty and dependence to which they would reduce the ministers of the Gospel by successful Disendowment.

The forces of Churchmen loyal to the Reformation within, and of Nonconformists without, organised and united, would be powerful enough to accomplish this—a greater act of reform in the National Church, whilst a less

painful enterprise, than the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of the minority in Ireland.

"The Church of England," says the leading organ and most accurate dynanometer of public opinion, "is not to be Romanised. If the Bishops cannot prevent it the laymen must try; and if they fail, the end of the experiment is near at hand."

And again, "If the evil of habitual confession goes on, popular feeling will undoubtedly make short work of an institution which shelters so offensive a superstition under the shield of national authority."

The Archbishops, from their position slow to speak, have concurred in describing the danger as "real."

There is, indeed, another alternative; that the nation should gradually yield; and through the machinations of the Ritualists within, and her own efforts without, the foreign Church of Rome be successful "in subjugating the inflexible will of an imperial race."

The success of sacerdotal ambition could only mark the decadence of England's glory, and the loss of her place amongst nations; but if this we deem unreasonable to suppose, since things cannot remain as they are, but are inevitably hurrying onward towards some great change, we must fain endeavour to answer the question, "REFORM OR DISESTABLISHMENT, WHICH?"

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